

February 18, 2019

Joint Student Success Committee, Subcommittee on Early Childhood Education, Sen. Lew Frederick, co-chair, Rep. John Lively, co-chair, Sen. Kim Thatcher, Sen. Chuck Thomsen, Rep. Cheri Helt, Rep. Diego Hernandez

Re: House Bill 2897 Early Child Equity Fund, submitted via email to [jcss.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:jcss.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

Dear Co-chairs and Members of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood Education:

I am writing on behalf of Social Venture Partners Portland (SVP) in support of HB 2897, creating the Early Childhood Equity Fund.

SVP is a multi-generational community of Oregon professionals engaged in venture philanthropy—we invest financial, human and social capital in nonprofit organizations, collaborations and social initiatives. Our current ten-year goal is to ensure that *all children have access to quality, culturally relevant early learning experiences and enter kindergarten with the foundation for learning and life success.*

Oregon's population is changing rapidly and there is a crisis in early childhood educational programs. Over 47% of children under 5 live in low-income households, but Early Head Start only reaches 10% of eligible children. Over 75% of low-income children, including many children of color, lack access to high quality publicly funded preschool. State funding for early learning has not kept pace with these changes. As Oregon becomes more diverse, it's imperative that our state invest in culturally-specific programs that lead to better outcomes for all our children and especially for children of color.

Expanded state funding for important early learning programs such as Head Start, Preschool Promise, and the Early Learning Hubs is critical. The Early Childhood Equity Fund would further strengthen the state's portfolio of services for culturally specific early learning and parent education services. The Early Childhood Equity fund created by HB 2897 would provide grants to culturally specific programs with a track record of reaching, retaining and supporting children of color and their families across the state. This investment would be an important starting point for reaching more families who need effective, culturally relevant services to support the success of their children.

SVP "Investor Partners" (donors) invest their money and expertise in culturally specific organizations successfully serving their communities, including (but not limited to), Latino Network, KairosPDX, and the Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization (IRCO). SVP has provided multiple years of funding to each of these organizations to help demonstrate the efficacy of their promising programs, as well as strengthen their operating capacity in order to prepare for programmatic growth. This enables Oregon's public resources to invest with confidence that these culturally specific organizations are well positioned to achieve the positive early learning outcomes for Oregon's children, especially those historically marginalized and underserved.

We appreciate your support of the Early Childhood Equity Fund. It will provide the investment we need to work towards eliminating the significant racial disparities children experience today.

Sincerely,  
Lauren Johnson  
Executive Director, Social Venture Partners Portland